

THE
***Final
Straw***
A WEEKLY ANARCHIST SHOW

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Mohammad Hureini of Youth of Sumud



The Final Straw Radio – Jan 28, 2024

This week, we're featuring a conversation with Mohammad Hureini (twitter / instagram), a young activist from Masafer Yatta, an area in the hills south of Hebron in the occupied West Bank in Palestine. Mohammad is a member of a non-violent group called Youth of Sumud that struggles to hold on to the sites and lives of Palestinian villages despite displacement by the Israeli military occupation as well as the illegal zionist settlements (like the neighboring Havat Ma'on) and their routine violence and impunity. For the hour, Mohammad speaks about the work of Youth of Sumud, their recent report co-published with The Good Shepherd on increased settler violence entitled *Indigenous Erasure: How the zionist movement is using state sanctioned violence to eliminate the Palestinian communities of the West Bank*, the South African genocide case against Israel in the International Court of Justice and other topics.

Youth of Sumud: <https://youthofsumud.org/>
 Mohammad Hureini twitter/instagram: @mohammadhureini

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MH: During my life, I have met many, many, many international activists who came and were in solidarity with us. Even when they go back to their homes, they don't stop, and they continue to share our stories and what we have been facing, and invite their friends to come and to visit here and to be with the people at least for three months. There are also outside people who promoted our rights and called for our demands to end the occupation. And it's effective because propaganda is hiding the reality. The old generation has been brainwashed by Israeli propaganda. Now we are working with the new generation that is born every day to tell them the truth about what's happening here. At some point in the future, they will be effective in their governments, in their country, to find solutions for the Palestinians.

TFSR: And we've already named a few groups that are working within the occupied territories and sending people to be in solidarity and listed those as being effective, such as Operation Dove from Italy, the International Solidarity Movement, and such.

MH: Many organizations used to be in the West Bank, I can't count them. I only talked about Masafer Yatta, and there are of course more of them in other places in the West Bank. Because also there is the Jordan Valley, the people there are also facing the same policies of evacuating the people from there.

TFSR: Mohammad, thank you so much again for having this conversation. And I wish you well and I will definitely point people to-

MH: Thank you for this chance to speak and share our stories with the people who are unaware of what we're facing. We appreciate this a lot, and I hope you can continue to raise awareness about reality and to end war crimes and occupation.

TFSR: Thank you. It's an honor for me.

MH: Thank you so much. We appreciate it.

MH: The US government has been supporting the occupation for a long time. So for us Palestinians, nothing changed.

TFSR: Are there any forms of resistance or organizations in particular from inside of the borders of '48 or elsewhere that you want listeners to make note of? I know that obviously, the war is still continuing. The settler violence is still continuing, but I wonder if attempts at blockading arms shipments or protesters going into and blocking government activities? Or if there's any of these things that you've seen people do abroad and you say, "Yes, more of this, it could be effective."

MH: Most of the Palestinian people who were in the '48 occupied lands and are still there and are under Israeli civilian law. Because now there are Palestinians who remain in silence since the '48. And have the Israeli citizenship. The occupation works hard to clearly make them forget their indigenous identity. To create borders between us, even though we are the same people, we are Palestinians. This movement came out from there, to call for their identity, to state that they are Palestinians living under Israeli law and hold Israeli citizenship. We have done with them many activities to keep the relationship between the same people who have been under the oppression since the Nakba. The resistance was still there but they had no power to face the Israeli government because they were completely under their mercy and they were really suffering. If you want to go to see how they're treated inside, sometimes you can see the apartheid and the racist rules used against them. They put on their sanctions. If you want to build a house, you need to pay millions of shekels to build a house, even on your own land, they impose restrictions on building. Even inside the occupied '48 land.

TFSR: Yeah, even living, as you say, is a hard enough thing for a Palestinian inside of '48. I'm wondering about activism to attempt to pressure either the Israeli government to stop the war the, US, UK or German government to stop sending weapons. I know it's a different thing right now inside of the borders of '48. Even for Jewish Israelis, the response is pretty quick to try to shut down protests. I wonder if there are any, besides the South African court, international solidarity that you've seen, that seems effective, or you want to see more of.

Mohammad Hureini: Hey, my name is Mohammad Hureini, I am from Masafer Yatta, a human rights defender with the Youth of Sumud group. Masafer Yatta is in the south of the West Bank and lies in the green line bordering the '48 occupied land.

TFSR: Would you tell us a bit about the Youth of Sumud, how the group started, where it works, and what it does?

MH: Yeah, Youth of Sumud is a youth grassroots organization, which was established during an experience in 2017 in a village that was evicted in Masafer Yatta in 1999 by the Israeli occupation forces. This village was one of the eight villages that was evicted at that time. From that time, until 2017, there was no one living there after that eviction in 1999. One of the reasons for eviction is to expand the settlements and build more settlements on Palestinian grounds, steal more lands and deny the Palestinians their basic rights to work in their lands. The ideology of the occupation is to occupy and displace the Palestinians, and ethnically cleanse the land from the Palestinians. When I started my activism it was with this group, which my bigger brother invited me to, he was the coordinator of this group.

The idea was to create life in this village and to encourage the people to go back to their homes after this evacuation and to recreate life and encourage them to return to their homes. In this village, people used to live in the past in the caves. The first step was to work on the caves to restore them to make them livable for people, build some bathrooms, and even plant trees to make it as it was before. This experience took a lot of our time, we left our families and went to this village. We used to sleep and be present there 24 hours. It was a hard choice for us and everyone pays a high price for that because at the beginning of that experience, we have many pressures and attacks by the Israeli settlers and the army. It was a strong message from the occupation that they didn't want anyone to be in this village. The night raids and destroying the trees that we planted, arresting us in the night, and terrorizing us is one example. During that experience, I was about 13 years old and I was really afraid of facing this. But with time and experience, I got used to that, even though I shouldn't get used to that, because this is not normal for humans. Our group started to extend and become human rights defenders for all our people in the West Bank, defending them. One of our activities was to accompany the shepherds who used to be attacked by the

Israeli settlers and doing campaigns, like the Faz'a campaign that helped the Palestinian farmers in the olive season harvest, to go all over the West Bank helping the Palestinians everywhere who faced attacks by the settlers stealing their olive trees, burning and breaking the trees. As a group, we believe in nonviolent resistance. I was born into a family that believes this.

We also have other campaigns, like Defund Fascism, which is focused on the Israeli Zionist organization that chose the war. That is a charity organization on the ground and in fact, there's an organization that committed war crimes against our people and is a part of the ethnic cleansing of the people here. For example, Regavim organization follows the Palestinians who build a home on their land, brings the Army in after them, and give them demolition order. This is a part of displacing the people and more people becoming refugees and homeless. This organization was supported by the US government with millions of dollars. Our group faced many challenges, experiencing attacks and even arrests, many assaults and threats in the night. When they raid your house and threaten your father and your family to stop our activism and stop our movement to defend our rights.

I want to give you an idea about Masafer Yatta. It includes around 33 villages, half of it, or a quarter of it was evicted in 1999 by the Israeli occupation forces. Masafer Yatta started to suffer from the occupation in the early '80s, when the Israeli Supreme Court declared Masafer Yatta as a military training firing zone for the army. This was the first excuse to evacuate Palestinians from their homes. As for my family, my grandparents were refugees in 1948. Two brothers of my grandfather were killed in those massacres. My grandparents fled from there and came to Masafer Yatta, which was their last piece of land here in Al Tuwani village around the 1950s or '60s. My father and his siblings were born here. When they declared it a firing zone area, the military base started to be built on Palestinian lands. Then they built houses for Israeli settlers. It was a war crime. The settlers are a tool of the Israeli occupation to terrorize the people, attack them, and steal more land.

How it was started? After the war crime that happened in '99 and the evacuation of eight villages of Masafer Yatta, the people in the region, my father, and other activists went to the Supreme Court and gave all of the proof of the ownership of the land to do something against all of the crimes that happened against the people. In 2000, the Supreme Court gave an interim injunction allowing the villagers to return to their homes and land, but banning them from building any new essential infrastructure with an

really humiliated. He is an old man, they didn't give him any medicine for his health condition. He was really suffering. He got out of there, but they didn't return his phone or his ID yet. They were really treated badly. You can go and look for the Palestinian prisoners who went out of jail and see how they were treated in the Israeli jail. They really were suffering in jail.

The women, as we have heard from them, when they were released, they were going to be raped by the Israeli soldiers. We cannot keep silent about that, because other women stayed in jail and other young Palestinians with children under the age of 18. Even they have been treated badly. What happens now in prisons is a tragic situation.

TFSR: Thank you for speaking on that.

I'd be interested to hear if you have an opinion concerning the US Biden administration's decision to impose visa restrictions on individuals coming to and from the US who are believed to have been involved in settler violence in the West Bank. I wonder what this means for people who have US citizenship who are participating in the violence.

Also, this obviously comes while the US continues to increase weapons shipments to Israel, where Israeli Minister of National Security, Itamar Ben-Gvir has already distributed assault rifles to settlers. This says nothing about the armaments that the US government actually gives to the army that they're using to assault Gaza with.

MH: I would ask you back, if these restrictions have any effects on the Israeli settler attacks in the West Bank, if they become fewer or more. The question is if it was effective on the ground. And the answer is "no", because when you ask this question, "Why didn't they stop the military aid to the Israeli government?" Because the Israeli government lets the settlers commit war crimes against the Palestinians. My analysis is that the US is doing at least something to calm down the situation. But in fact, it's not.

TFSR: Yeah. And it makes sense for the Biden administration to try to say, "Look, we're being reasonable here" because he's facing an election this year. He's already alienated huge parts of the US population by refusing to call out the violence, let alone pre-October 7, but since then-

vention on the ground. Most of the people here have no trust to have a real justice injunction for Palestinian rights and to end this apartheid regime.

TF SR: It's a bit long of a wait for this and kind of lacking some punch. I heard some people talk about it on Democracy Now! this morning, saying that maybe they could not make those arguments in a legal situation in the first place, but that they haven't excluded Israel from the genocide charge. But it is a bit disturbing that they're not calling for an immediate ceasefire to save lives.

MH: Yeah, this is like taking your mind out of your head.

TF SR: Netanyahu's government has made a show of exchanging Palestinian prisoners for hostages from the October 7 attacks, or for captured IDF or occupation soldiers. Meanwhile, Israel has been sweeping up hundreds of Palestinians under military occupation law without hearing, the administrative detention. I wonder if you could speak a little bit about how prisons function within the occupation. And what you know at the moment about Palestinian prisoners. I know that Al-Addameer just put out a report on the situation of Palestinian prisoners. I haven't had a chance to read. If you could talk about how prisons are used during the occupation, and how they've been used in this process recently?

MH: After the 7th of October, the conditions in prisons became worse than before, the prisoners have been humiliated by the Israeli occupation army and soldiers. We have witnessed this during the time when the Palestinian prisoners were exchanged for hostages. And when they got out, we have heard from them how they were treated in the Israeli prisons. They were even denying them food, one meal for 10 people at least, putting the people in the cold without anything, and banning them from going outside into the sun from the cell for 15 minutes to breathe some fresh air.

One of the old people here from Masafer Yatta was arrested for razing his sheep in his land. Because one of the settlers said that he attacked him, he was in prison for four days. And when we went to pick him from the prison in Ramallah, the military prison, he told us about the bad experience that he witnessed in jail. They were really treated as animals, they were

interim injunction. Most of the people were not able to come back because they were afraid of being evicted again, as one example. My group was born in Sarurah village and we continued the actions and events until 2006, when the Israeli government was going to build the apartheid wall around Masafer Yatta and include it in the occupied lands. This resulted in weekly demonstrations against the apartheid wall by all Masafer Yatta's people, and everyone paid a high price for that. Most of the people here spent 4-6 months in jail for demanding the removal of the apartheid wall. But in the end, they succeeded in removing it. And in this period we, as a new generation, me and other guys born under this occupation rule, seeing our families resist by nonviolent means and learning how to face this occupation, as we are a people who has no power with which to face the occupation. We are born into this reality and try to look for ways to fight the occupation, the crimes and the violation of basic human rights.

TF SR: Obviously, it's clear through what you said, the current group, the Youth of Sumud, comes from a long heritage of resistance in various forms, engaged by people that generationally have been on this land. Can you talk a little bit about the significance of the name, what does Sumud translate to?

MH: Sumud means the steadfastness. It means the resilience of the youth and of the people.

TF SR: I wonder if you could talk specifically about Sarurah, a little bit more about that specific community, and the work that your group has done there?

MH: As I said before, Sarurah is one of the villages that was evicted. Our idea was to create life and to break the plans of the occupation to steal the lands of this village and extend the settlements there. We also wanted to bring international attention and international visitors there, to raise awareness about the situation in the entire area of Masafer Yatta. Sarurah is one of the villages that was planned to be re-occupied quickly in a short term. Other villages, like Tuba, that face settler attacks and demolition of houses by the Israeli government. Preventing the water and energy networks from going to these communities, this was part of denying the people their basic

human rights and this was against all of the laws in this world. This is the reality of the occupation that is trying to ethnically cleanse the Palestinians and commit war crimes against them.

We, the new generation, decided to face the occupation and to stand for our rights. Our group started to help the people. We are from the same community, but people were proud to have a group from the community that stood up for them and was a real body on the ground to face and represent their community. Let me tell you more about the daily violations that we're facing. I talked about the demolition of houses. Weekly there's a demolition order and demolition of houses of Palestinians in Masafer Yatta, but when you want to compare it with the settlements, those settlements even are in the military firing zone area, there are all of the human services that are for the settlers who are illegally living there. And you are the indigenous people on your land, you are denied even water supply, or working or traveling on your land.

This is making you crazy and you are losing your mind, how is this going on? And the world outside believes that Israel is a democratic state. What? Where is the democracy that I never saw? It never existed on the ground. The Israeli propaganda is really strong and can change reality quickly. So we are working to break ties and injustice and everything that occupation built on our account.

TFSR: Obviously, if settlements are coming in, and you say that they have all of the necessary infrastructure that they could want... When you say that the injunction allowed for Palestinian folks to move back to the land but there was a ruling against building the necessary infrastructure. Is that right? Can you talk about what that infrastructure is? You're mentioning water, I imagine, water catchment, electricity...

MH: They ban you from electricity, water, they ban you even from building your own house. Most people are living in tents and caravans which are under threat of being confiscated and demolished. And most people depend on the caves and living in the caves. You will have no right to build your own house, a decent house for your family to stay and sleep in. When this interim injunction was imposed, I forgot to tell this part, in 2022, the Supreme Court gave the final decision which gives the green light for the Israeli army to do anything in Masafer Yatta. We started witnessing the destruction and

still. And he fought with nonviolent means. Any resistance against the occupation will cost you.

I was born into a family that has a long experience with occupation, they have suffered a lot and been displaced two times from their homes. My grandmother is the main one who taught us how to face this occupation, and at least protect ourselves from being shot. But one can get killed at any moment for no reason. We chose it with people who believe in fighting and staying in your lands. Otherwise, if you use any form of violence resistance, you will be dead and you will cause the effect on other people because Israel is using collective punishment against the Palestinians. This was the choice of all of my community, all chose this way to resist the occupation.

As for the effectiveness of it, the main thing that we succeeded in is to remove the apartheid wall in 2006. This was a huge success for us. But until today, occupation is still planning to rebuild this apartheid wall again. And we are hoping that the international community at some point will intervene and stop all this genocide and war crimes being committed against us as Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza.

TFSR: That leads to the question of the International Court of Justice in the Hague decided yesterday to hear further arguments by South Africa, which was charging genocide against Israel, and it ordered Israel to prevent genocidal acts in Gaza. But the court stopped short of demanding a ceasefire or ruling on longer-standing issues such as the annexation, settler violence, the blockade of Gaza, or the general occupation. I know that it's very early in the process. But I wonder if you could share any thoughts that you or some of your community members have had on the ICJ rulings and process and if you have hope for it.

MH: First of all, I want to really appreciate South African encouragement and standing up and speaking for our rights and against the genocide that's being committed against us.

What the International Court of Justice issued, most people here feel bad about the ruling because they didn't say to introduce a ceasefire, to stop the killing of the people, and to stop the bombing. If it's genocide, you're waiting time, letting more people be killed? I don't know why. I cannot express it in words. We have never witnessed a real international inter-

giving justification with no proof. So far, we didn't have any proof that can say that there's a Hamas headquarters under this hospital, or demolishing the houses of Palestinians. What's the main reason for demolishing a house and making innocent Palestinians homeless? They can't justify all of these things that are happening. How would you justify the the shooting of my cousin in Al Tuwani? I used to hear the stories, as it he was trying to do an operation and kill a settler. But in fact, the settlers are in the middle of the village. So who's come to commit a crime in the middle of the village? It is the settler who was armed. So mostly they are giving justification for what they are doing. The problem is the world is supporting them, and pushing in their hands to continue the genocide and war crimes against the Palestinians.

TFSR: Yeah, and then afterward, saying, maybe, "Oh, well, I'm sorry that some people got hurt in the meantime, this is not our intention. They shouldn't have been there or whatever."

MH: Exactly. Their excuses and justifications are really silly and ironic. You're killing humans. You're everyday attacking humans with souls. Humans are not numbers. Since I was born, I have heard that it is all for justice and peace. Which peace you're talking about? You're supporting the apartheid regime and the occupation.

TFSR: You've talked about the Youth of Sumud as a non-violent organization, which means it has to rely on civil disobedience, on outside observers, appeals to morality, and appeals to law to do what you do. Can you talk about what the grounding of that choice of non-violence is? Is it a pragmatic safety approach? Is it philosophical, maybe a mixture of the two? And how effective do you find it to be interacting in that way?

MH: Yeah. Let me add that we as Palestinians under occupation, and according to international law, we have the right to resist in any way, violent or non-violent. We as people believe in the non-violent way. Even to protect yourself, you are using nonviolent methods, that means you are not at risk of being killed by the Israeli apartheid regime, because we have witnessed many friends who got killed, even if they are fighting by non-violent means. A friend of my father was in administrative detention for years with no charges

demolition of houses of Palestinians in Masafer Yatta.

And after 7 October, it became even crazier. The settlers had illegal guns and wore military uniforms, bulldozed and demolished Palestinian homes, burnt them and terrorized the people. This case is becoming more and more crazy. I think most of the people listening to us should come and see the reality on the ground. They follow the news of the Israeli propaganda. Just come and see the reality and the facts on the ground and see how the people are really facing the apartheid regime and the racist policy of the occupation.

I am in my house now and there is a settlement 300 meters away from my home and they have all of the human services, and my village, the main village that now has all the utilities. We got it in 2010 after a long fight with the occupation and long repression, even the school, the clinic, the kindergarten. Tony Blair, who was the British Minister back then, intervened and then we got the master plan that were allowed to build. We are the main village, we can build. But other villages that are far away from here, 500 m from here, have nothing. They're living in caves and caravans. They get water from wells. They collect the rainwater and use it. Sometimes the settlers poison these wells and deny water to people. So people used to risk their lives, driving their tractors to bring water in big tanks. And sometimes they got confiscated by the Israeli army and police. We and the settlers are under the same government control, but there is an apartheid regime and occupation against the Palestinians.

TFSR: The Israeli courts that are issuing these injunctions, how do they deal with the legality of Israeli settlers building into areas where you have been evicted from, that you say are military firing zones? If they're illegal, are the legal systems of this so-called democracy in Israel challenging those settlements?

MH: Speaking about the law and the legality... Let's speak about international law. First, the settlements are illegal according to international law and so are outposts – this is what we call the establishment of a settlement. It's even illegal in the Israeli law. But these laws are hypocritical. They introduce laws to show the world that they have a law. They are building outposts and settlements and when you want to go to the court, and we as Palestinians in area C, according to the Oslo agreement, are under military control, occu-

pation control. We are going to military courts in Palestine, but the settlers living in the settlement use civilian law against us. There is a big difference between the Palestinians and the settlers living in outposts. And when you go to the judge, where is the judge from? He is a judge from one of the settlements. He's a settler. He's living in one of the settlements, and he's trying to evacuate the Palestinians from their homes and terrorize them. You're going to the judge, he's your executioner, and he will never give the justice for you.

TFSR: I know that this has been documented for a very long time, but can you talk a little bit about the international law that the settlements are contravening? The international law that they're breaking by allowing for settlements?

MH: Okay. The settlements are illegal under international law, but they can also amount to international crimes, according to Article 49 of the 4th Geneva Convention stating that "the occupying power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies." It also prohibits individual or mass forcible transfers, as well as the deportations of protected persons from occupied territories, and settlements that are created by both those practices – Israel displaces us from our land to put colonial settlers in. The key acts required for the establishment of their settlements amount to war crimes under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Under this body of law, the extensive destruction and the appropriation of the property were not justified by military necessity and were carried out unlawfully and forcefully. Settlements are really prohibited and illegal, according to international law, but until now there has been no international intervention in this situation, and the occupations have continued since 1948, since the Nakba. The Nakba didn't stop at that time, it's still ongoing against the Palestinians because Israel didn't stop to commit war crimes every day. It continues to kill and steal more lands, build settlements, and let settler militias arise and commit war crimes and genocide against the Palestinians.

TFSR: Yeah. And it looked from my understanding of it, in the prior years, when there were international challenges brought through the legal system, through the United Nations, for instance, or adjacent courts, they were always blocked by the United States, by Israel, and

MH: Yeah, I respect all the movements and organizations who came to stand in solidarity with our people. There are many organizations. There is the Operation Dove organization from Italy that has been in Masafer Yatta since 2004. And there is the ISM, International Solidarity Movement from the UK I think. They are also in Masafer Yatta trying to be present everywhere and document all the violations. There was CPT, Community Peacemaker Team, an American organization that used to come here to Masafer Yatta for many years. I might forget some of them, but these are the main organizations present in the region. There are Israeli activists who are against the occupation and the violations who used to be present in Masafer Yatta and sleeping alongside the Palestinian people. And even these people are getting attacked more than the Palestinians because they stand for us.

TFSR: Yeah, they're being considered traitors to the settler cause, I guess. Thank you. And I can put links to those, and, of course, to this report in the show notes so that listeners can find more information about them and read the report themselves.

Since October 7, there have been media narratives in the US and in the West, and on Wikipedia and elsewhere, that have been claiming that the increased violence, all of the military assaults that are occurring by the Israeli forces are in response to a specific group that they're calling Hamas. I think that in Israeli society, as I understand and what I've seen through media representations, there's a statement that "all these people are this thing, this thing is our enemy". However, I've heard people say, "We need to stop the terrorists" as a way of justifying the bulldozing of whole neighborhoods and displacement of people into areas that they're calling a safe zone. And then the military bombing of that safe zone.

Can you talk about the narrative in the media and the damage that it does, saying that this is Israel's war on Hamas, rather than on Gaza, or on the Palestinian people?

MH: All came back to the Israeli propaganda, it's unprovoked narratives that they are talking about. They are justifying for themselves to commit more war crimes against the Palestinians, by saying that the Hamas headquarters, for example, lay under the hospitals, and they bombed the hospitals, which affected or killed many people, and hundreds of martyrs got killed. They are

to not bring these children to school. This has been my main activity since 2017, if there is no military to bring these children, I used to go on my own to bring the students. I would switch on a camera and film everything that happens to us. And during this activism, I got arrested around five times because I accompanied the children. Because the settlers used to call the army.

One thing you should know about Masafer Yatta, here on the ground, the army is a servant for the settlers who are living in outposts and settlements. Anything they tell the soldier is believed. They said to take me out of the place I was, and the soldiers did it. The army came and told me to go away from the place where I used to wait for the children. And I refused because I did not do anything illegal. Then they arrested me and detained me for a few days and I had to pay a fine and come back to continue my activism. To arrest me and put me in jail is a way to terrorize me and stop me from doing what I was doing. But I continued until I finished high school, after five years of accompanying children and being with them. This is a story that I wanted to share with you about the Israeli attacks on me.

They used to come while I was on my land to kick me out of there. Once me and my father were attacked by the Israeli settlers. And after they attacked us, they accused my father of intending to murder a settler in the middle of the settlement. Imagine that. My father was detained for 14 days until the judge considered the case. During this period we got an international activist who was documenting the attack by settlers. This is what helped my father to get out of jail, otherwise, he would be in jail for at least 10 years for these false accusations. Even when my father was innocent of these charges, they made him pay 10,000 sheckels as a fine to get out of jail and also banned him from returning to the land for one month. Imagine how we are facing the injustice from occupation and how they are putting pressure on us to leave our land.

TFSR: Yeah, that's incredible. As you mentioned before, it would be good for people from the listening audience to come and witness the apartheid that exists where you're at and the importance of having people there as witnesses. Can you name a couple of the organizations that either that person who was documenting, who helped your father's case, was from or the group that was helping to accompany the children, any of the organizations that you respect, that are actively showing up in person in Masafer Yatta?

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by the UK, by other allied countries that had a specific geopolitical view of what they wanted, I guess, the region to look like and the role of Israel as a military outpost to be.

But people have been talking recently, more and more about the violence that has occurred since October 7 and into today between what Hamas did and what the Israeli occupying forces have done in Gaza and in the West Bank, as if it were without this context of decades and decades of violence that you're talking about right now. I wonder if you could talk a little bit more about what was happening before the 7th of October and before Palestine comes into the news and into the awareness of people around the world. Not for everyone, obviously, but for a lot of people around the world in these huge blips of violence, where the Israelis decide to lay siege to Gaza and to bring in warplanes and drop bombs or impose a blockade that denies medical goods and food and all these other things. But there's these intervening years, as you say, of day-to-day violence and settler colonial expansion that doesn't get talked about.

Can you talk a little bit about how it feels to be someone who has been experiencing this all of your life and to hear your people and your country being talked about when bombs are dropping?

MH: Yeah. As you said, everything didn't start off on the 7th of October, it started with the Nakba in 1948. We as Palestinians have been calling for decades for our justice and for our rights and for our freedom to get rid of the occupation. And living under the same policies and the same crimes that were committed against us before the 7th of October. After 7th October, it got worse because the Israeli settlers were taking advantage of the world. There is no attention as it was before because all of that attention is on Gaza. The settlers have an advantage, they are committing war crimes. During that period, on the 13th of October, my cousin was shot by a settler, he got into my village and shot him from zero distance, wounding him in the stomach. The bullet that he was shot with was a prohibited bullet, according to international law, it is an expanding bullet, that affected most of his stomach, which caused him to stay for 85 days in the ICU. Just two weeks ago, he got out of the hospital. Imagine how much the situation got crazy after the 7th of October because the settlers were taking advantage and until now, the settler who shot my cousin is not in jail, because there is no justice for us. There

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is no power for us Palestinians, there are no rights, they didn't deal with us as humans, they dealing with us as numbers.

TFSR: I'm sorry, I'm glad to hear that he's out of the hospital at least, that's such a long time. And I'm sure there's some lasting damage from using that dum dum bullet.

Your organization Youth of Sumud collaborated with a group called Good Shepherd Collective to publish a booklet in November of 2023. That was called Indigenous Erasure: How the Zionist Movement Is Using State-Sanctioned Violence to Eliminate the Palestinian Communities of the West Bank. In it, you documented how the "Israeli war on Hamas", as the US media promotes it as if the war that's going on in Gaza is affecting Hamas, but how it's grabbing headlines and Zionist settlers that have, in the meantime, displaced at least 16 Palestinian communities in the West Bank, like you're talking about right now. They're using the cover of the tragedies that occurred against non-combatants on the 7th. And then also the international attention on the war in Gaza to further steal land. Can you talk about this report and how it's been received by people who have read it?

MH: Yeah, but first, I would like to seize the opportunity to talk about the international media and using the term "Israeli War On Hamas", as if the murder of over 20,000 Palestinians and displacement of millions in Gaza has any relation to eliminating Hamas. What's happening now is the continuation of our ethnic cleansing since 1948.

The Indigenous Erasure booklet shows how settlers and the occupation forces displaced and caused the displacement of the people leaving them refugees. It presents the attacks and the full stories of the people there to understand the situation in the West Bank. How the policies are used against the Palestinians. I hope the listeners can go and see this booklet so they can understand more. Because it's a long booklet and it includes what I said before during the interview.

TFSR: Yeah, it's a very straightforward read with lots of documentation. It's very useful. And you're actually quoted in the Indigenous Erasure report as having been targeted by multiple attacks by Zionists from the Havat Ma'on settlement. I wonder if you could talk a

little bit about some of these experiences that are talked about in the journal.

MH: Yeah, when I started my activism at age 13 and being a human rights defender and defending our rights, I was young and had a lot of power to move and go around. I had encouragement from my parents. I used to accompany schoolchildren who came from Atuwani village to study in my village because my village has the main secondary school in Masafer Yatta. The students for villages around used to come to my village. A settlement is built between the two villages, it made it hard to move between the two villages. The children who came to study were attacked many times by the Israeli settlers and even the army. And this is the worst violation of the right to education in Masafer Yatta you can see.

So I used to accompany school children, while myself being a child, and I knew there would be no protection from that. I waited for them to finish classes. I want to tell this school children's story from the beginning. Our villages are 1.5km apart. In the middle, the settlement of Havat Ma'on is built on the road that connects these two villages. After the establishment of this settlement, anyone who uses the road will be attacked many times and may risk his life. In 2004, two American internationals walked with these children to accompany them in the middle of the settlement. And they were from the CPT organization. It's an American organization, that used to accompany children in the morning. And the settlers would sometimes attack them. And one of the internationals was attacked really hard and brutally, he was hospitalized, he was bleeding. What helped this children's case is that one of the Americans was attacked brutally, and his mother was in the American Congress, which put pressure on the Israeli government to find a solution for these children. This is the main thing. Without the international presence in Masafer Yatta, or in the West Bank, there will be no solutions for the Palestinians.

After that, what the Israeli government did was to use a military Jeep to accompany these children to the school instead of removing the settlements that were built illegally on the Palestinian lands. This Jeep should come in the morning and afternoon to bring the children to school and take them back safely to their homes. But even though they Israeli soldiers who need to accompany the Palestinian children, sometimes they don't show up to the job. Sometimes they got the children there late. This was intentional